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U.S. declares a cease-fire in tit-for-tat expulsion war

By Richard Beeston
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The United States yesterday called a cease-fire in the tit-for-tat war of expulsions of spies and diplomats with the Soviet Union.

"We hope that this set of issues can now be put behind us," said State Department spokesman Charles Redman, without announcing any new retaliation for the latest expulsion of American diplomats from Moscow.

"We need now to get on with resolution of the larger issues affecting U.S.-Soviet relations and build on the progress made in discussions at Reykjavik," he said.

U.S. officials denied that the administration had "blinked" in failing to respond directly to the Kremlin's latest move against American diplomats and pointed to the numbers involved in the recent round of expulsions.

The score to date: 25 diplomats from the

Soviet Mission at the United Nations kicked out and another 55 from the Soviet Embassy in Washington and the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco expelled.

The Soviet Union has expelled 10 Americans from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the U.S. Consulate in Leningrad. It has also withdrawn 260 Soviet personnel employed as cooks, maids, drivers, clerks and maintenance workers at the two U.S. missions in the Soviet Union.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger yesterday declared the United States the winner because it had removed "a very large part of the leadership of the Soviet spy network."

"It's easy to see why the Soviets find it distressing because we're getting rid finally of their principal leadership of espionage network in the United States," he said in a television interview.

All of the 80 Soviets expelled from the United States were KGB and GRU operatives, and the two spy agencies have

been "decapitated" in the United States, U.S. officials said.

Mr. Redman said the Kremlin's latest expulsions were "a wholly unwarranted response" to the U.S. move to establish "parity" between American and Soviet diplomatic personnel.

Because of the withdrawal of the Soviet support staff, he said, substantial staffing changes would be needed at the U.S. Em-

bassy. The diplomats there, he said, would be able to cope with the situation, but he acknowledged that "without question there will be some change in our ability to monitor what happens in the Soviet Union."

The State Department said yesterday it would place reciprocal restrictions on the Soviet Embassy in Washington and consulate in San Francisco in response to other new restrictions being imposed on American missions in the Soviet Union. These include restrictions on the number of visi-

tors coming to the Soviet Union to stay with the American ambassador and the number of temporary visits to Moscow of U.S. government officials.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in his efforts to score in the diplomatic war, has succeeded in making a hardship post harder for American diplomats in Moscow and Leningrad.

But he has also thrown away a most important KGB intelligence asset by withdrawing 260 local Soviet employees who are known to spy on U.S. diplomats in Moscow.

All Soviet support staff — maids, drivers, translators, secretaries, cooks and maintenance workers — are supplied by the Soviet government agency UPDK, which is run by the KGB. The workers provided by the agency are trained to perform tasks of espionage and blackmail and are required to report regularly to the KGB.

American diplomats view their Soviet maids as full-time surveillance officers who spy on their employers and their families and let Soviet intelligence agents into their apartments to maintain listening devices. Soviet maids and secretaries have been known to seduce diplomats on occasion, and it is a rule among Western embassies in Moscow that all affairs, even between Western couples, must be reported to the embassies to avoid Soviet blackmail attempts.

The big, popular American canteen in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, largely staffed by locals, has been a key target of spies despite posters warning against loose talk. Some members of Congress have long called for the replacement of Soviet staff by Americans, but this is a costly operation and will be difficult now that the State Department has imposed a ceiling of 251 diplomatic

personnel for each country.

U.S. officials estimate that it already costs about \$150,000 to maintain a diplomat in Moscow, and costs would soar if more American staff were sent to Moscow. The State Department may be faced with having to sacrifice diplomats and attaches for American plumbers and heating experts.

"They have really done it this time," said the wife of a senior U.S. diplomat recently returned from Moscow.

"I am so glad I am not there."

U.S. officials predict discomfort for diplomats and their spouses deprived of domestic and secretarial support. Who will replace those

stolid Russian women who do the laundry for the U.S. Marine guard, and who will clear the snow from embassy drives and residences?

Yesterday an American nurse in Moscow said she could not return home as planned because the Soviet-run travel agency in the U.S. Embassy, which arranges travel for diplomatic personnel, was vacant.

Ambassador Arthur Hartman drove himself to work, where he called a meeting of all personnel to divide the chores. At Spaso House, Mr. Hartman's luxurious residence, his wife, Donna, helped prepare a kosher meal for visiting Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, and Marine guards washed the dishes.

In the embassy commissary, milk that arrived from Finland yesterday was almost gone by the afternoon as people stocked up.

The weekly shipment of fresh fruit and vegetables from Finland to supplement scarce supplies in Moscow was canceled because Soviet employees were unavailable to clear it through customs and bring it to the embassy.

The Associated Press noted yesterday that Alfredo Colletti, the embassy chef, sat in his empty kitchen wondering what to do with 400 stuffed, roasted quail in his freezer, planned for the lunch special.

This article is based in part on wire service reports.